

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for conducting an auction, comprising the steps of:
 - offering at least one item for sale, for a first predetermined period of time;
 - receiving a first bid for said item from a first bidder;
 - according a first value to said first bidder as a first function of at least one of a timing of said first bid and a worth of said first bid;
 - receiving at least one succeeding bid for said item from at least one other bidder;
 - according a second value to said at least one other bidder as a second function of at least one of a timing of said succeeding bid and a worth of said second bid;
 - accumulating values accorded said first bidder for each bid placed by said first bidder during said auction;
 - accumulating values accorded each said at least one other bidder for each bid placed by said at least one other bidder during said auction;
 - comparing said accumulated values of said first bidder with said accumulated values of each said at least one other bidder;
 - identifying an auction leader based on a third function of said comparison of said accumulated values of said first bidder with said accumulated values of each of said at least one other bidder; whereby said auction leader is accorded a benefit, thereby encouraging bidders to bid more competitively, more often and more aggressively.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said first function and said second
2 function are substantially identical.

1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said first function and said second
2 function are different.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said first function accords a greater
2 value to the earliest bid of a group of substantially identical bids, thereby encouraging bidders
3 to bid early and competitively, to secure greater value for their bids in comparison with other
4 bidders.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said first value decreases over time,
2 until said first bid is made, during said first predetermined period of time, thereby encouraging
3 early bidding on said item.

1 6. The method of claim 1, wherein said second value decreases over time,
2 until said second bid is made, during said first predetermined period of time, thereby
3 encouraging early bidding on said item.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein said first value decreases over time,
2 until said first bid is made, during said first predetermined period of time, thereby encouraging
3 early bidding on said item.

1 8. The method of claim 1, wherein said first function increases said
2 accumulation of said first value during the time said first bid is worth more than all other bids.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein said second function increases said
2 accumulation of said second value during the time said succeeding bid is worth more than all
3 other bids.

1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
2 comparing said worth of said first bid and said worth of said at least one
3 successive bid;
4 accumulating said value accorded said first bid when said worth of said first bid
5 is greater than said worth of said at least one successive bid;
6 accumulating said value accorded said at least one successive bid when said
7 worth of said at least one successive bid is greater than said worth of said first bid.

1 11. The method of claim 10, wherein said comparing of said worth of said
2 first bid with said worth of said at least one successive bid is performed on a substantially
3 continuous basis.

1 12. The method of claim 10, wherein said comparing of said worth of said
2 first bid with said worth of said at least one successive bid is performed at predetermined
3 times.

1 13. The method of claim 12, wherein said predetermined times are
2 incremental time periods.

1 14. The method of claim 13, wherein said incremental time periods are days.

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2 15. The method of claim 13, wherein said incremental time periods are
hours.

1 16. The method of claim 13, wherein said incremental time periods are
2 minutes.

3 17. The method of claim 13, wherein said incremental time periods are
4 seconds.

5 18. The method of claim 10, wherein said accumulating of said values
6 accorded to any bidder occurs each time said worth of a bid placed by said bidder exceeds a
7 worth of all preceding bids.

8 19. The method of claim 1, wherein a worth of a successive bid is required
9 to be greater than a worth of a preceding bid by no less than a minimum increment, and
wherein at least one of said first function of said timing of said bids and said second function
of said timing of said bids accords a value which increases if said worth of said successive bid
is greater than said worth of said preceding bid by more than said minimum increment, thereby

10 encouraging successive bidders to place a bid having a worth in excess of said predetermined
11 minimum increment plus said worth of said preceding bid.

1 20. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2 establishing a floor value of a bid on said item, and said according values to at
3 least one of said first bid and said at least one successive bid depends upon the amount by
4 which said at least one of said first bid and said at least one successive bid exceeds said floor
5 value.

6 21. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of said first function and
7 said second function accords a value based upon at least one predetermined timing
8 consideration.

9 22. The method of claim 21, wherein said at least one predetermined timing
10 consideration is the time of day.

11 23. The method of claim 21, wherein said at least one predetermined timing
12 consideration is proximity to the end of said first predetermined period of time.

13 24. The method of claim 21, wherein said at least one predetermined timing
14 consideration is the duration of the period any individual bid has remained the bid having the
15 greatest worth.

1 25. The method of claim 21, wherein said at least one predetermined timing
2 consideration is having the bid with the greatest worth at predetermined time milestones.

1 26. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of said first function and
2 said second function accords a value based upon at least one predetermined worth criterion.

1 27. The method of claim 26, wherein said at least one predetermined worth
2 criterion is being the bidder who places the first bid.

1 28. The method of claim 26, further comprising:
2 establishing a floor value of acceptable bids for said item; and
3 wherein said at least one predetermined worth criterion is being the initial bidder
4 who places a bid in excess of said floor.

1 29. The method of claim 26, wherein said at least one predetermined worth
2 criterion is being the initial bidder to meet at least one predetermined bid worth threshold.

1 30. The method of claim 1, wherein said benefit is permitting said auction
2 leader to acquire said item.

1 31. The method of claim 30, wherein said benefit is permitting said auction
2 leader to acquire said item at a discount.

1 32. The method of claim 31, wherein the amount of said discount is
2 determined by the total accumulated value of said auction leader's values accumulated during
3 said auction.

1 33. The method of claim 32, further comprising:
2 comparing the total accumulated value of said auction leader's values
3 accumulated during said auction, to the total accumulated value of at least one bidder other
4 than said auction leader during said auction, and

5 wherein said amount of said discount is a fourth function of said comparison of
6 said total accumulated value of said auction leader's accumulated values during said auction, to
7 said total accumulated value of at least one bidder other than said auction leader during said
8 auction.

9 34. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
10 continuing said auction after said first predetermined period of time for a second
11 predetermined period of time;

12 limiting participation in said auction during said second predetermined period of
13 time to bidders based upon a fifth function of the total accumulated values of bids for each said
14 bidders accorded during said first predetermined period of time.

1 35. The method of claim 34, wherein bids placed during said second period
2 of time are weighted as a sixth function of accumulated values of bids placed during said first
3 predetermined period of time.

1 36. The method of claim 30, wherein said auction leader is permitted to
2 match the bid which otherwise would win said auction after said first predetermined period of
3 time has expired.

1 37. The method of claim 30, wherein said auction leader is permitted to
2 acquire said item at a discount from the bid which would otherwise have won the auction after
3 said first predetermined period of time has expired.

1 38. The method of claim 30, wherein said auction leader is provided an
2 exclusive opportunity after the expiration of said first predetermined period of time to secure
3 said item by placing a further bid which is worth more than the bid which would otherwise win
4 said auction.

1 39. The method of claim 38, wherein said further bid must be worth more
2 than said bid which would otherwise win said auction by a predetermined amount.

1 40. The method of claim 39, wherein said predetermined amount by which
2 said further bid is worth more than said bid which would otherwise win said auction is
3 determined as a seventh function of a comparison of a total accumulations of values of bids
4 placed by said auction leader to a total accumulation of bids placed by the person who placed
5 said bid which would otherwise win said auction.

1 41. The method of claim 1, wherein said benefit is apart from said auction.

1 42. The method of claim 41, wherein said benefit is monetary in nature.

1 43. The method of claim 42, wherein said benefit includes a credit against
2 future auction purchases.

1 44. The method of claim 42, wherein said benefit includes participation in an
2 awards program.

1 45. The method of claim 1,
2 wherein at least two substantially identical items are offered for sale;
3 wherein bidders are permitted to bid on more than one of said at least two
4 substantially identical items;
5 wherein each bidder must specify how many of said at least two substantially
6 identical items are being bid upon, and the amount of said bid; and
7 wherein values are accumulated for each bid on each item.

1 46. The method of claim 45, wherein said values of each bid on each item
2 are accumulated separately by bidder; and further comprising the step of identifying an item
3 leader for each item offered for sale.

1 47. The method of claim 46, wherein a benefit is accorded each item leader.

1 48. The method of claims 19, wherein said minimum increment is fixed.

1 49. The method of claims 19 wherein said minimum increment is an eighth
2 function of an accumulation of values accorded to a bidder.

1 50. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of said first function and
2 said second function is accumulated for all bids placed by a bidder up to a specific time.

1 51. The method of claim 50, wherein said specific time is at the end of said
2 first predetermined period of time.

1 52. The method of claim 50, wherein said specific time is at the time of
2 placing each bid.

1 53. A system for conducting an on-line auction, comprising:
2 means for offering at least one item for sale, for a first predetermined period of
3 time;

4 means for receiving a first bid for said item from a first bidder;
5 means for according a first value to said first bidder as a first function of at least
6 one of a timing of said first bid and a worth of said first bid;

7 means for receiving an at least one successive bid from at least one other bidder;

8 means for according a second value to said at least one other bidder as a second
9 function of at least one of a timing of said second bid and a worth of said at least one
10 successive bid;

11 means for accumulating all values accorded said first bidder for each bid placed
12 by said first bidder during said auction;

13 means for accumulating all values accorded each of said at least one other
14 bidder for each bid placed by each said at least one other bidder during said auction;

15 means for comparing said accumulated values of said first bidder with said
16 accumulated values of each said at least one other bidder;

17 means for identifying an auction leader based on a third function of said
18 comparison of said accumulated values of said first bidder with said accumulated values of
19 each of said at least one other bidder; whereby said auction leader is accorded a benefit,
20 thereby encouraging bidders to bid more competitively, more often and more aggressively.

51 54. The system of claim 53, further comprising:

52 means for comparing said worth of said first bid and said worth of said at least
53 one successive bid;

54 means for accumulating said value of said first bid when said worth of said first
55 bid is higher than said worth of said at least one successive bid;

56 means for accumulating said value of said at least one successive bid when said
57 worth of said at least one successive bid is higher than said worth of said first bid.

58 55. The system of claim 53, further comprising:

2 means for establishing a floor value of a bid on said item, and said according
3 values to at least one of said first bid and said second bid depends upon the amount by which
4 said at least one of said first bid and said at least one successive bid exceeds said floor value.

1 56. The system of claim 53, further comprising means for providing a
2 discount to said auction leader; and

3 means for comparing the total of accumulated values accorded to said auction
4 leader during said auction, to the total accumulated values accorded to said at least one
5 successive bidder during said auction; and

6 wherein said amount of said discount is an eighth function of said comparison of
7 said total of accumulated values accorded to said auction leader during said auction, to said
8 total accumulated values of said at least one successive bidder during said auction.

9 57. The system of claim 53, further comprising:

10 means for continuing said auction after said first predetermined period of time
11
12 for a second predetermined period of time; and

13 means for limiting participation in said auction during said second
14 predetermined period of time to selected bidders based upon their total accumulated values for
15 bids accorded during said first predetermined period of time.
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